EMERSON.

By DR. FRANK CRANE.

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Ralph Waldo Emerson stands in a niche all his own in the hall of fame.

He has no fellow. He has no rival. He is not "primus inter pares." There are no "pares."

He is as distinct and solitary upon his throne in the kingdom of letters in America as Shakespeare is in England.

He stands for the cleanest, most honest, gentlest, and most courageous thinking that has ever been done this side of the Atlantic. And there is not much on the other side that is of his class.

Time is the supreme critic. The judgment of men has to stand many years before it settles. All heat must go down, all personalities must be precipitated, all the foam of controversy must disappear, before the final crystal estimate is apparent.

Emerson has been dead long enough for the petty confusions of his time to be gone; he is now to us but a pure and luminous spirit. He moves in our midst as an eternal mind.

And his works have that catholicity of understanding, and that utter honesty of reporting only what Nature whispered to him, which render any writing immortal.

He is usable. He is nearer to us than the other great demigods of literature and we can comprehend him better.

While he strikes the same deep note as that we hear in Montaigne, in Goethe, in Marcus Aurelius, and in Socrates, he is worth more to us than any of them because his ideas were born in our language.

No man can read a page or two of Emerson every day for a month, read it slowly and with reflection, and not be richer, sounder, more accurate, and more powerful in his thinking.

He is not a "highbrow" nor a "literary Brahman," and it is time his reputation was rescued from such imputation; for, like Jesus and like all really great teachers, he speaks to the naive mind. He would be the first to deny, if he were alive today, that he belonged to that class of egoists who like to flatter themselves with the pitiful pose that they speak only to the elect.

Emerson's message is for all. It is for the deep, universal heart of man. He had the prophetic democracy of Lincoln, only he was a thinker, not a doer. He had the world-spirit and brotherliness of Whitman, only his fancy was always lucid.

Of all the books that ought to be in the library of any man who loves the intellectual life, the first place belongs to the writings of our greatest American thinker,

Ralph Waldo Emerson.